

SIR JOHN ALEXANDER MACDONALD (1815-91)

11th January, 2015, is the 200th anniversary of the birth of Canada's first Prime Minister.

Sir John A. Macdonald, who served as Canada's first Prime Minister from 1867-73 and again from 1878 until his death in 1891, is probably the most outstanding man in the modern history of Canada. It was Macdonald who was largely responsible for forming a confederation of the provinces in 1867 – an extremely difficult job of pulling together people of widely varied ethnic, political and religious backgrounds to form a nation.

Born January 11, 1815 in Glasgow, Scotland, his family emigrated to Canada in 1820 and settled initially at Glenora, Ontario, and later at Kingston, where he received his education. He was admitted to the bar and established a lucrative practice, which enabled him to become active in politics, public affairs and governmental posts.

As a Canadian Conservative politician, Macdonald was Attorney-General for Canada West (an office which he repeatedly held) in 1854, and Premier of Ontario, 1857-58. He was responsible for the building of the great Canadian Pacific Railway and the opening of the Canadian Northwest Territory. One of his outstanding accomplishments was the creation of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police (now the Royal Canadian Mounted Police). He was one of the British commissioners who signed the Treaty of Washington. He was created K.C.B. in 1867 and G.C.B. in 1884. He died in Ottawa on June 6, 1891 while still in office as Prime Minister.

Macdonald was an active Freemason and proud of his association with the Fraternity. He was initiated at the age of 29 in St. John's Lodge No.758 (EC) at Kingston on March 14, 1844, passed April 22, 1844 and raised June 27, 1844. In 1857 he affiliated with Zetland Lodge No.326, Toronto, Ontario, and demitted in 1884. He was a life member in 1888 of Dalhousie Lodge No.52, Ottawa, Ontario.

He affiliated with Ancient Frontenac Royal Arch Chapter No.1, Kingston, and was an honorary life member (1871) of Lafayette Chapter No.5, R.A.M., Washington, D.C. He became a Knight Templar in 1854 in Hugh de Payens Encampment No.22, resigning in 1884.

Macdonald was depicted on the Canada issue of October 1973, one-cent orange; also on the three-cent brown of September 1917; the two-cent green "The Fathers of the Confederation" and the 12-cent green.

From: Canadian Freemasons Who Served as Prime Minister

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